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# GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETIN

ON

PALESTINE ADOPTS FLORIDA INDUSTRY

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Should you encounter a Bible wherein the dove returned to Noah's Ark with a leaf of an orange tree you could be little more surprised than if you visited Palestine today and found that the olive, which provided one of the world's oldest metaphors, is being supplanted by citrus fruit.

"One most unexpected post-war development in Palestine," says a bulletin from the Washington, D. C., headquarters of the National Geographic Society, "has been a constructive economic situation flowing from a feature of Turkish taxation instituted just before the end of Ottoman rule. Palestine was ground badly during the World War. Enemies were pushing in on all sides and contact with much of the outside world was cut off. The necessity for revenue became greater and greater. Much of Palestine's wealth is in its producing trees--olives, nuts, oranges and other fruits. Every growing 'economic' tree, whether it actually produced or not, was taxed heavily. At the same time the government created a demand for wood for use on the narrow gauge railroads used in military operations. The result was that all non-bearing and poorly-bearing fruit and nut trees were cut down, increasing incidentally, the average quality of those that remained.

Taxed Orange Groves Into Existence (Subhead)

"But the demand for wood made marked inroads on the orange trees, to avoid which the last of the Turkish governors remitted the tax on such trees. The orange became suddenly the one tree that the people could afford to own extensively, and the result was that they were planted in great numbers. As a result of this somewhat unusual bit of economic experimentation, numerous groves of orange trees now flourish in Palestine, oranges are most abundant and fine luscious ones can be bought for less than a cent apiece.

"With all its bickerings and bitterness among Jews and Arabs and Christians, Palestine has been the scene of much constructive work since the end of the World War and there are phases of its economic life which are promising. The city of Jerusalem, in effect blockaded, was in a condition of the utmost squalor when in 1917 the Turkish soldiers evacuated it and were replaced by victorious British forces. One of the first steps then taken, it will be remembered, was to pipe into the city a supply of fresh running water, a boon which it had not possessed since the days of the Roman Empire. Since the provision of a priceless water supply work of sanitation has been taken up and pushed steadily forward, until today the city is clean.

Irrigation Works Next (Subhead)

"The third step was the undertaking of a definite project for the restoration of historic places and features about the city. Much of this work has been done through an organization of Christians, Jews and Moslems, since Jerusalem is holy to all three groups. City walls have been rebuilt, walks relaid, and old gardens replanted.

"One of the principal projects ahead in the development of Palestine is the construction of irrigation works. Because of centuries of neglect and the denudation of its forests, much of the country has become dry, desert-like waste. But the soil of many such areas is rich, and if an adequate supply of water could be turned upon them, the country might once more deserve the description 'flowing with milk and honey.' The land within the great rift of the Jordan valley can be most easily supplied with water, and it is there no doubt, that the first extensive irrigation projects will be carried out.

"The water of the Jordan, on its way to the Dead Sea has a descent of more than 600 feet in the 75 miles separating the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. It is believed to be practicable to develop a considerable amount of power by harnessing the Jordan at several points. Some of the more ambitious proposals even look to the creation of an industrial Palestine with the Jordan power, while others would make use of it for municipal purposes and irrigation work.

#### Flying Below Sea-Level (Subhead)

"Nowhere else in the world is there such an extensive region so far below sea-level, and in which numerous people live, as in the Jordan Dead Sea rift. The surface of the Dead Sea is about a quarter of a mile below the surface of the Mediterranean, and the Sea of Galilee is roughly half that distance below sea-level. The valley, ranging in width from five to fifteen miles, and its lower slopes, therefore form an area of between 500 and 1000 square miles lying more than 600 feet below the sea. Here military airplanes have been flying recently,

creating unique world's records--flying far above the earth, yet still below sea-level.

"The Jordan river is the eastern boundary of Palestine as marked out under the mandate given to Great Britain. Nearly half the fertile valley, therefore, which it is proposed to irrigate, will not belong to the mandate, but to the Emirate of Kerak--'Transjordan'--one of the Arabian countries about which very little is heard. Kerak, like Irak, is closely allied to the Kingdom of Hejaz which adjoins it to the south. The three states are ruled by a father and two sons. Husein Ibn Ali is King of Hejaz, his son Abdullah is Emir of Kerak, and Feisal, a second son, and perhaps best known of the three, is King of Irak or Mesopotamia.

"Because of the dissatisfaction of the Arab population of Palestine with a government which they believe to be operated chiefly in the interests of Jews, and the sympathy of other Arabs with their case, the relations between Palestine and Transjordan are not now the most amicable."

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